

PREPAID TELECOMMUNICATION CARD FOR HEALTH CARE COMPLIANCE

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of patient health care compliance. More particularly, the invention is a prepaid telecommunication access card that provides one or more reminder messages to encourage patient compliance with health care programs, such as maintaining a regular program of prescription medication consumption. In one embodiment of the invention, a prepaid telecommunication access card activates a reminder system that contacts the patient each time a dose of medicine should be taken.

In the United States, only one in three persons properly complete medication programs as prescribed by a doctor. The consequences of such non-compliance with medical prescriptions in the U.S. alone are estimated to include over 31 billion dollars in extra health care costs, 100 billion dollars in lost income, and over 125,000 deaths per year. Taking medicines at the correct times and dates may also

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significantly improve the efficacy of a course of treatment. Furthermore, the failure to adequately complete health care programs may lead to sickness of others, or can promote the development of drug resistant pathogens. Additionally, there is an economic loss, for patients, pharmacies, and pharmaceutical companies, due to unconsumed medicines. Of course, most patients want to follow their prescribed course of treatment, but even the most intelligent or diligent people may forget to take their medicine, and may skip one or more prescribed doses.

Medical compliance systems known to the inventor include interactive voice response (IVR) systems, medical notification systems, and integrated compliance devices. A variety of prepaid telecommunications access systems are also known to the inventor. These systems are described hereinbelow, however, none of these systems provide the inventive features of the present invention such as combining a prepaid telecommunication access card with an automated medical reminder system.

Known to the inventor are several interactive voice response (IVR) systems for medical compliance and notification purposes. U.S. Patent 6,014,626, entitled *Patient Monitoring System Including Speech Recognition Capability*, and U.S. Patent 5,722,418, entitled *Method for Mediating Social and Behavioral Processes in Medicine and Business Through an Interactive Telecommunication Guidance System*, use IVR systems with patient dialogs to encourage and monitor medical compliance. While these systems are used for medical compliance, none of these systems includes use of a prepaid telecommunication access card.

Also known to the Inventor are medical notification systems that transmit compliance reminders in a variety of formats. For example, the E-PILL PAGER

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MEDICAL REMINDER SERVICE sends a text message to a beeper or digital (text-enabled) cell phone reminding the user to take his or her medicine, along with optional instructions (see: <http://www.medtimer.com/epill/senepitoyourp.html>). MEDIMOM sends text messages to a pager, digital cellular phone, email account or PDA, and includes a Web interface for setting up the messages (see: <http://www.medimom.com/>). The ARSDIGITA REMINDME SERVICE sends email reminders for any recurring events (see: <http://remindme.arsdigita.com/>). The HEALTHWATCH 100 MEDICAL REMINDER WATCH provides an enhanced digital watch, programmed through a computer interface, which can provides medical reminders and then records medication times (see: <http://www.medtimer.com/epill/healthwatch.html>). The VERIZON system for REMINDER MESSAGES FROM VOICE MAIL is used to program a voice mail system to call at a certain day and time to play back a previously recorded message (see: <http://www.gte.com/CustomerSupport/HowDoI/UserGuides/rvmremind.html>). The CALLING CALENDAR by SPERRY SOFTWARE uses a computer to place phone calls with appointment reminders (see: <http://www.sperrysoftware.com/>). MEDREMINDER INC. provides a pager and sends text reminder messages to it for a monthly fee (see: <http://www.oregonlive.com/technw/99/09/tn091307.html>). None of these systems, however, includes features of the present invention such as a prepaid telecommunication access card. And, the ease-of-use and marketability of such existing medical reminder systems may be significantly enhanced through use of the present invention.

Medical compliance devices that include integrated medicine delivery and compliance reminders are also known to the inventor. U.S. Patent 5,597,072, entitled

Totally Interactive Patient Compliance Method, describes a medicine delivery system

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with integrated compliance monitoring. MED-COMPANION, available from PIONEER MEDICAL SYSTEMS, INC, is a medical compliance machine that includes automated drug dispensing. The present invention is distinguished here, e.g., because it does not require any specific medication dispensing technology and adds the prepaid telecommunication access card.

Finally, U.S. Patent 5,867,495, entitled *System, Method and Article of Manufacture for Communications Utilizing Calling Plans in a Hybrid Network*, teaches the use of prepaid telecommunication access cards for a variety of network services, such as web access. Here, the use of a prepaid telecommunication access card for medical compliance reminders is not disclosed.

Despite the variety of medical compliance devices noted above, patient medical compliance remains a problem. This is partly because existing medical compliance systems are unfamiliar to patients, are difficult to use, do not use conveniently available infrastructure (such as the phone system), and lack easy configuration facilities. Furthermore, existing systems are also difficult to market, promote, distribute, activate, use, and renew.

The present system and method addresses the above noted issues by providing a simple and intuitive way to deliver the reminder message by flexibly intercombining a prepaid telecommunication access card with medical compliance technologies. The card may be conveniently purchased at prescription counters or otherwise delivered with prescribed drugs, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, health supplements, exercise regimens, or other treatment programs. Thus, the present invention provides a familiar, convenient and easy-to-use system and method for encouraging

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patient health care compliance, which may be effectively marketed by pharmacists, medical professionals or pharmaceutical companies.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to encourage compliance with health care programs.

It is another object of the present invention to remind a person to take their medicine as prescribed by a health care professional or other person.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a simple, convenient reminder encouraging a person to comply with their health care program.

The present invention is a system and method for use of a prepaid telecommunication access card for receiving one or more reminders to encourage compliance with health care programs, such as maintaining a regular program of prescription medication consumption. In one embodiment of the present invention, the prepaid telecommunication access card is a physical card that is offered to the patient at a point-of-sale (POS) location, such as the check out counter of a pharmacy. Once activated by the card, a reminder system contacts the patient each time a dose of medicine should be taken. The patient may select a variety of preferences, such as: call times and dates; message content; call forwarding number(s); and, whether a response is expected from the patient.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention is illustrated in the figures of the accompanying drawings which are meant to be exemplary and not limiting, in which like references are intended to refer to like or corresponding parts, and in which:

Figure 1 is a flow chart of a process for using a prepaid telecommunication access card for health care compliance in accord with an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 2 is block diagram of a system for using a prepaid telecommunication access card for health care compliance in accord with an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 3 illustrates a health care compliance reminder system in accord with an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Embodiments of the present invention will now be described in detail with reference to the accompanying figures.

Figure 1 is a flow chart of a process for using a prepaid telecommunication access card in accord with an embodiment of the present invention. In step 102, the card is acquired by a patient, either at a point-of-sale (POS) location or through a third party such as a pharmacy, doctor, hospital, or drug company. In step 104, the card is activated by an initial call placed by the patient, or by a call placed by third party such as a pharmacist. Once the card is active, a variety of patient reminder profile preferences,

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such as the patient's name and contact numbers, are configured in step 106. The medical compliance reminder system is now ready to transmit a medical compliance reminder at the next dosage time, step 108. When a reminder message is transmitted, the system will determine if the transmission was successful, step 110. If the transmission was not successful then the system will wait and retry the call or try other contacts, step 112. The system tests if there are further calls to be made in step 114. If there are further reminder calls, then the system returns to step 108 to generate additional calls at selected times, otherwise the system terminates in step 116.

Figure 2 is block diagram of a system for using a prepaid telecommunication access card in accord with an embodiment of the present invention. Here, a telecommunications access card 202 is used to activate a medical reminder system 204. The medical reminder system 204 has access to patient profile information 206, such as the patient's name and telephone contact numbers. Once the medical reminder system is activated, a series of patient contact calls 208, 210, 212 are made to transmit medical compliance reminders to the patient.

Figure 3 illustrates a health care compliance reminder system in accord with an embodiment of the present invention. The system shown generally at 300 includes a vendor 305 who sells a pre-paid card 310 to a patient 315. The card includes a PIN or other authorization code, and a phone number. Using a conventional telephone 320, the patient 315 dials the phone number to connect, via a phone network 325, with a reminder system 340. The phone 320 may include a keypad. The reminder system includes a controller 342, which communicates with an accounting function 344, an automated phone function 346, a patient profile information database 348, and a reminder scheduler

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349. These components may be provided using computer hardware and software technologies which should be apparent to those skilled in the art.

An administrator input device 330, such as a keyboard, allows an administrator to enter information regarding the patient, such as a patient profile which is stored at the database 348, prior to the patient accessing the reminder system 340. The patient profile may include information regarding what medicines the patient should be taking. Moreover, the reminder scheduler 349 may be programmed with an associated schedule based on the patient profile (e.g., the patient should be reminded to take one pill of a first medicine once a day, one pill of a second medicine every other day, and so forth). The automated phone function 346 dials the patient at the appropriate time to provide an automated voice reminder.

The accounting function 344 keeps track of the remaining amount of reminders that are to be provided to the patient based on the value of the pre-paid card 310. For example the card 310 may provide one month of reminders. When the patient phones the reminder system 340, a prompt is presented by the automated phone function 346 to enter the PIN or other identifier on the face of the card 310, e.g., using the keypad. The accounting function 344 is then provided with the PIN, e.g., via the controller 342, and it is cross-checked against a list of valid PIN numbers. A level of reminder service is also associated with each PIN, e.g., one month, two months, etc.

The patient may be further prompted to enter an identifier, such as a social security number. This identifier is used to access the patient profile information that has already been established on behalf of the patient by the administrator. Or, the PIN may be sufficient to identify the patient, assuming the PIN information is recorded prior to its

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sale to the patient. Having the patient enter an identifier allows the cards to be sold to a general population of patients.

The appropriate reminder schedule can then be activated so that the appropriate reminders are received at the scheduled times for the specific patient's medicines. Note that other reminder may also be provided. For example, a diabetic patient may be reminded to take a blood sugar test. Reminders of upcoming doctor's appointments and the like can also be provided. Alternatively, the patient may enter reminder information himself via the telephone.

In general, the prepaid telecommunication card for health care compliance may provide a wide variety of benefits. As mentioned, first, the patient, or someone acting on their behalf, obtains the prepaid telecommunication access card and activates an account, with a corresponding account identifier, via a Personal Information Number (PIN). After activation, the patient connects to one or more reminder system servers via phone or computer network and configures the account, including callback number(s), reminder schedule, and other information that are stored in a patient profile database. Or, as discussed, some or all of the configuration may be made by a system administrator, health care provider or other third party. Later, at or near the designated time, the reminder system servers place a call to the patient with a medication compliance reminder. The reminder system may, optionally, make follow-up inquiries such as whether the patient took the medicine, has experienced side effects, wants to recharge the prepaid card, or wants to refill the prescription.

The telecommunication access card, also called a 'phone card' or referred to as a 'Personal Information Number' (PIN) herein, may be a physical card such as a

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plastic, paper, or other laminar or flat surface. For example, the card may be in the same format as a typical driver's license, credit card or other type of consumer card. The telecommunication access card may also take other various forms. For example, the prepaid telecommunication access card, phone card or PIN may also be printed or affixed onto the medication container, or printed in a communication such as a letter or postcard, thus eliminating the need for a laminar card. Alternately, the card may be delivered electronically via the Internet, an Intranet, email, a web page, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a handheld computing device, or may be stored or delivered through a smart card. Typically, the telecommunication access card includes a Personal Information Number (PIN), which may be any alphanumeric sequence, symbols, or other data. The PIN may be hidden, encoded or human readable. In one embodiment, a hidden or scratch-off PIN may be used on the card or packaging. Alternately, the PIN may be visible, but would require subsequent activation to prevent unauthorized use. An encoded PIN, such as a bar code or other information encoding, may be scanned or otherwise entered into a computer system and recognized by an automated process as known to one skilled in the art of computer image scanning and recognition. Thus, the terms 'telecommunication access card', 'phone card' and 'PIN' are synonymous herein and may also refer to a variety of objects that are not physical 'cards'.

The term 'patient' is used herein to mean anyone acting on the patient's behalf, and the term 'patient' does not imply any specific type of doctor-patient relationship or ongoing medical treatment program. A 'patient', as used herein, means anyone who uses the prepaid telecommunication access card for medical compliance

reminders, including a health care professional, caretaker, relative, friend, agency, administrator, computer service, or a representative acting on behalf of the patient.

The prepaid telecommunication access card may be activated at the point of purchase or at a later date. The card may be activated by the patient, by a representative of the vendor or manufacturer, by a sales agent such as a pharmacy clerk, or through an automated computer system. Activation may occur in the store, in the home, or at any arbitrary location, and may be conducted over the phone, through the web, through an internal network, or through a portable or wireless device such as a PDA. In a preferred embodiment, the patient, pharmacist, doctor, nurse, caretaker or their representative accesses an interface that permits the activation of the card and configuration of the reminders. This interface may be through phone, web, proprietary computer network, touch tone, spoken, microphone, keyboard, or mouse selection interface. Some of this information entry may be automated based on data already present in the pharmacy's, doctor's or administrator's computer systems, or may be present from a previous session by the patient.

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the medical reminder system may be an automated call processing center, a computer-based telecommunication system, or an interactive voice response system as is known in the art of automated call generation and processing. For each patient, a set of patient profile information is stored in a database. The profile information may be entered by the patient, by a doctor, administrator or other third party. The medical reminder system accesses the patient profile database that stores patient data and other profile information including, without limitation, the names and contact numbers of patients who will receive medical

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reminders. The system also has a timing mechanism for placing calls at specified dates and times as specified in the patient profile database. In one embodiment of the present invention, the profile information may be modified through an interface implemented via a touch tone telephone, a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), a freeform email message, an email template message, an interactive web page, or other interface means. Patient profile configuration information may also be summarized for easy confirmation. For example, patient profile information configuration may be summarized on an interactive web page, where it can be reviewed for accuracy and confirmed when correct.

Generally, the patient profile information may include any information about the patient. In the preferred embodiment, patient profile information includes: (1) the patient's name, with an optional recording of the patient or other person saying the name so the patient will be greeted with a familiar voice and with proper pronunciation; (2) the patient's contact phone numbers; (3) instructions to try a sequence of numbers or other contact devices until a response is provided indicating presence of the patient, or until a suitable answering machine/voicemail is reached; (4) instructions to specify different numbers or number sequences for different days of the week, times of day, special days such as holidays, or combinations thereof. There are several ways to customize the message itself including: (1) selecting a choice of language; and, (2) selecting a custom message left by patient, loved one, or selected from one or more preferred voices, for example those of famous people.

The reminder system may also be configured with the administrator's contact information, such as phone numbers; email addresses; fax numbers; preference regarding order to try; ability to specify different numbers or preferences for different

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days of the week, times of day, special days, or combinations thereof. The system may also set a parameter that determines whether to contact the administrator or third party when a patient cannot be reached, has discontinued the medication, has experienced side effects, needs a prescription refill, or needs to add more money to the prepaid reminder account.

In the configuration profiles for each medicine, parameters may include:

(1) the days and times at which a reminder should be made (simplifying choices such as "every day", or an interval of days may be presented); (2) the number of reminders to make (generally corresponding with the number of pills to take); (3) whether usage instructions should be read with some or all of the reminders, and, if so, the instructions to be read as to the use of the drug (e.g. recorded, typed or pre-typed); (4) whether an answering machine message should be left; (5) whether the system should ask for the patient before asking whether s/he has taken the medicine; (6) whether to wait for the patient to take the medicine before hanging up; (7) whether to remind the customer to order a refill when the medicine is running out; (8) whether the patient should be asked about specific side effects, and if so, how often; (9) whether only one reminder call needs to be made if two or more medicines can be taken simultaneously; and (10) an optional ringback at number(s) that patient provided, and/or email(s) and/or faxes, to confirm proper setup.

One embodiment of the present invention computes the patient's time zone based on the geographical location of the area code to phone, and optionally allows the patient to adjust the time zone if desired. Several reminder schedules may also be combined in embodiments of the invention. For example, if two medicines may be taken

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at the same time, the system will combine the two reminder messages into a single message that reminds the patient to take both medications.

The phone reminders are generally made within a fixed time period, e.g. within 15 minutes of the time specified by the user the system will phone the patient (or establish contact in the way the patient requested). If a person answers, an optional recorded or synthesized message asks the patient to come to the phone and press phone key responses such as a '1' if the patient is available, or '2' if the patient is not. If the user had been prompted to speak the patient's name during setup, the recording of this name can be spliced into the message at the point(s) that the name should be read. If an answering machine picks up and the user has specified that other contact numbers should be tried, or if nobody picks up, or if the person who picks up indicates that the patient is not there, then the system will try the next contact method if there is one.

If the patient cannot be reached, depending on user preferences, the medical reminder system may call alternate contact number(s) to leave an answering machine message, and may also wait a preset interval, such as half an hour, and try again. The system may, optionally, give up after a number of unsuccessful attempts, or may also contact the system administrator or other contact, such as a doctor or relative, to notify them that the patient could not be reached. The system may optionally contact a third party when the patient is unreachable for a several days, dosage intervals, contact attempts, or if someone answers and indicates that the patient cannot come to the phone.

Once the patient has been contacted, the medical reminder system will play a reminder message that asks whether they have taken their medicine, or simply plays a reminder to take the medicine. The term 'reminder' or 'medical reminder'

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includes, but is not limited to any voice, text or graphical message delivered through the telephone system, the Internet, or any wireless device. For example a medical reminder may include a prerecorded telephone call or an email message. In other embodiments of the present invention, the medical reminder system may activate a beeper or generate text for electronic messages such as electronic mail messages, Simple Message System (SMS) messages, or other message formats.

The content of the reminder message may vary according to the medical situation or patient preferences. The system may either use complete prerecorded messages or may splice together custom messages using techniques known to those skilled in automated call processing and telemarketing. For example, the name of the medicine can be played from a recording or with text-to-speech synthesis of the medicine name, or with a pre-stored recording that corresponds with the names of a number of common medicines and spliced into a general message to take a medicine.

Specific interaction scenarios may also be incorporated into the medical reminder system. In one embodiment of the invention, the system will prompt the patient to press '1' if they have taken their medicine; '2' if they want to be reminded again in half an hour; '3' if they want to be reminded again at a different time; '4' if they have concerns about taking the medicine; or, '5' if they have discontinued the use of the medicine for any reason. If the patient indicates that they have taken their medicine, the system may optionally thank or congratulate them, and record this successful transaction to a database.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the system inquires about the patient's status, for example by asking the question 'Are you ok?'. The patient may

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respond by pressing a key, for example pressing '1' if they are ok and pressing any other key if they are not ok. Alternately, the patient may provide a verbal response. In general, the system will infer that the patient is not ok, if there is no response. The patient or an administrator may configure the system to initiate a variety of responses, if the patient indicates that they are not ok. Responses may include scheduling a follow-up call, contacting a third party, contacting a doctor or health care provider, or requesting emergency services.

If the patient indicates that s/he wants to be reminded again after an unspecified interval, the system will ask for input regarding when to try back or whether the patient wants to be reminded again at a pre-specified or just-specified interval. Based on the selected response, the systems will mark the deferred transaction to the patient profile database and repeat the process at the specified time

If the patient has concerns about taking the medicine, the system can ask if s/he would like to hear a list of potential side effects. If this option is selected, the system will play a list, optionally categorized by severity and in conjunction with instructions about discontinuation or other instructions for that severity category, and ask the patient if they believe they may have one or more symptoms. If the patient indicates affirmatively then the system advises the patient to discontinue use immediately (if appropriate); to contact their physician or pharmacist immediately for further instructions (if appropriate); and/or to contact a poison control center or other entity immediately for further instructions (if appropriate). Optionally, if the condition is severe, the system may automatically bridge the call, or offer to bridge the call, to connect the patient to a poison control center, emergency center, doctor or other entity, and pass selected patient

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profile information to that entity, such as the patient's name, condition, phone number, possible side effects, medicine and other medicines that are being taken, location (which if not already stored may be computed from the phone number and/or a reverse telephone directory lookup). Optionally, depending on the administrator's configuration, the system may contact the administrator or another contact (such as the doctor's office) to alert that contact to the potential side effect.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the system will ask if the patient would like to discontinue the reminder calls, or if the patient would like another call after specified time interval to ask whether to discontinue the reminder phone calls. For example, calls can be 'turned off' for a period of time, such as during a vacation. If the patient wants more time to determine whether to discontinue, the system may ask for the time interval if necessary, phone back at that time to present the discontinuation question again, optionally asking whether more time is needed to make that decision. If the patient affirmatively wants to discontinue use of the reminder system, then the system registers that preference to the database and cancels future reminders for this medicine. Optionally, if configured as such by the administrator, the system will contact the administrator or other concerned party to report this event. If the patient has discontinued use of the medicine, the system can provide a message that conveys the danger of not completing a prescription course unless on the advice of a doctor, suggesting that they contact a doctor to discuss their concerns. The system then registers this information to the patient profile database and cancels future reminders for this medicine. Optionally, if configured as such by the administrator, the system can contact the administrator or concerned party to report this event. The system can also inquire whether the patient

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would like time to discuss this with their doctor and whether the patient wants to receive a callback within a couple hours or at a different time to confirm that they have chosen to discontinue use of the medicine. If affirmative, then the system records the time interval for the callback, if necessary, and records this transaction to the database to schedule the callback. The system may also permit the bridging of the call to a doctor or health care practitioner.

When the card is close to expiration or when the card has expired, the system gives the user a choice to add more money to the card, if the prepaid reminders are running out. Money may be added either: (1) with a credit card already on file; (2) with a new credit card; or, (3) billed to a third party, if such an arrangement already exists. When a additional calls are added to the card, the patient may elect to keep selected profile information. In an emergency situation, an expired card may still be used to access services as appropriate.

The system may optionally offer a refill message if a refillable prescription is about to expire, or, optionally, offer to connect the patient directly to a pharmacy to refill the prescription (possibly the same pharmacy where they bought the reminder card and, presumably, the prescription). Alternatively, the system may request that the pharmacy automatically refill the prescription. This may be done without bridging the call. The system may optionally offer a health tip, with the option for the patient to learn more by pressing a key. The system, optionally, may offer a sponsor message, with the option to learn more or take some action by pressing a key. Such optional messages are only played if an emergency situation has not arisen.

When a session is complete the system will typically say goodbye and disconnect, if the call has not been bridged.

At any time during the life of the prepaid telecommunication access card a summary report may be created that describes the patient's actual medical compliance history. For example, the report may summarize prescribed dates and times for taking medication doses in conjunction with the patient's replies indicating whether they have complied with the prescribed dosage dates and times. Other information, such as side effects questions may be included in the summary report. The report may be electronic or printed and may be delivered through email, a web page or other document format. The report may be delivered to the patient, a doctor or other designate of the patient.

Additional optional features of the present invention include: (1) checking harmful drug interactions and providing appropriate warnings, for example if incompatible drugs are entered; (2) when medicine is running low, offer a reminder to refill the prescription with an choice to be connected directly to the pharmacy or to have the prescription refilled directly; (3) offer to 'auto-refill' the card when the card runs out of reminders by automatically adding a certain amount to the card and billing the added amount to a credit card.

There are several, optional, commercial alternatives for financing the prepaid telecommunication access card. Cards may be paid for (in part or in full) by a sponsor who wishes to play a prerecorded message. Cards may be paid for by sponsor with a message, in which the user can press a key or keys to receive information. Cards may be paid for (in part or in full) by medical insurance, or a medical insurance company to improve compliance. Cards may be paid for by companies, such as pharmacies or drug

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manufacturers, which place a message reminding the patient to refill their prescription. This may also include the option to connect directly to the pharmacy at which the prepaid reminders were purchased, or at the sponsoring pharmacy of choice, with an optional promotional fee paid by the pharmacy.

There are also several options for billing for reminders through use of the prepaid telecommunication access card. Cards may charge per reminder, for example 30 prepaid phone reminders. Cards may charge per interval, possibly with limits such as the geographic area of the reminder calls and the maximum number of reminder phone calls, for example unlimited reminder calls for one month in the New York City calling area. And, cards may charge per prescription, for example, all the necessary phone reminders for a particular prescription. Additionally, cards may be purchased as gifts, or as a part of a 'get well' card or package.

The prepaid telecommunication access card can be marketed in a variety of ways. As discussed above, the card may be sold at the point-of-sale counter in a pharmacy or store. The card may also be directly marketed to consumers through broadcast, print or other media. The card may be sold through electronic media, such as the World Wide Web. The card may be sold through doctor's offices, and may be recommended or prescribed by doctors. The card may be sold through pharmaceutical companies or pharmacies, and may be bundled with or otherwise provided with prescription orders. In certain sales scenarios, the card is paid for by a pharmacy, pharmaceutical company, insurance company, insurance policy benefits, or other third party and may be provided for free or at a discount to the end-user patient, doctor or downstream distributor.

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While the invention has been described and illustrated in connection with preferred embodiments, many variations and modifications as will be evident to those skilled in this art may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, and the invention is thus not to be limited to the precise details of methodology or construction set forth above as such variations and modification are intended to be included within the scope of the invention.

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